

NEWS

A Newsletter to Assist Maine Towns in Dealing with Local Transportation Concerns

From The Maine Local Roads Center

MAINE LOCAL ROADS CENTER

Community Services Division • MaineDOT

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with your local road
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WE'RE BACK!

After a few years of being "off the grid," we decided it was time to start up our newsletters again! Due to many staffing changes both here at the Center & in municipal government, we thought it was important to remind everyone who we are and the services that we provide.

We offer technical assistance on subjects such road maintenance, traffic issues, winter plowing & sanding, work zone safety, flagging and MUCH MORE!

WORKSHOPS

We routinely offer Work Zone Traffic Control every spring & Snow & Ice Control every fall. This year we plan to offer less of these classes & more of the classes that have not been offered for the past several years. For upcoming workshops & events, go to maine.gov/mdot.mlrc.

SALT

Each year we invite each municipality and county to take part in the opportunity to purchase your winter salt through our State Contract. There is no obligation; simply potential for lower salt prices. Look for that statewide email from Tammy Sobiecki to arrive some time in February.

New Speed Limit Setting Process

Until recently, the primary focus was on the 85th percentile speed. That has changed to a more context-focused approach. FMI go to maine.gov/mdot/mlrc/technical/trafficissues.

Labor Rates for Private Equipment Rental

Every year, the MaineDOT publishes "state rates" that it uses in its work. Many municipalities also use these for their local work. These rates change at the beginning of every year. FMI go to maine.gov/mdot/csd/laborrates.



“Deadly fixed objects” on Maine Roads

Do your town roads have hazardous mailboxes, trees, walls, and fences just off the road?



Based on 3-year crash data (2021-2023) available from the MaineDOT, on average, 60 people in Maine are killed annually and another 2,500+ are injured in crashes where vehicles leave the road and hit a roadside fixed-object. These “lane departures” account for approximately 50% of all Maine fatalities.

When it comes to improving safety for crashes, the primary objective is to keep the vehicles from leaving the road in the first place through measures such as signs, pavement markings, delineator posts, etc. In reality, however, some road departures will still occur due to other reasons like driver distraction, weariness, etc. To help make the road safer for these motorists, roadsides should be designed and/or retrofitted when possible, to have a sufficient “clear zone” free of any hazardous fixed-objects.

ROADSIDE HAZARDS

INCLUDE:

- Ditches
- Curbs
- Utility poles
- Mailboxes
- Sign posts
- Guardrails
- Trees
- Fences / Gates
- Bridge rails
- Culverts ends / headwalls
- Embankments / Bridge Piers
- Edge drop-offs

What fixed objects are hit the most frequently in Maine?

According to 2021-2023 crash data published by MaineDOT, the highest number of fixed-object crashes per year involved trees and ditches with an annual average of 1,465 crashes each, followed by embankments at 1,687, utility poles at 1,165 crashes, and guardrails at 725 crashes. Mailbox crashes averaged 218 annually.

Some Examples of Dangerous Fixed Objects:

- Ditches that are unusually steep or deep.
- Sign posts that are not crash worthy (wood posts larger than 4X4 inch with no weakening holes) or not breakaway (metal posts).
- Trees with trunks 4 inches or more in diameter.
- Mailboxes with wood posts that are larger than 4” by 4”.
- Mailboxes with metal post that are embedded more than 2 feet in the ground and are stronger than 2 inch diameter standard strength steel.
- Mailboxes which are “creative” welded steel or brick-encased, or granite posts.
- Pavement edge drop-off greater than 2-1/2 inches.

What to do about roadside hazards

Before you take any action on how to treat an existing fixed-object along a roadside, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the fixed object located in the town right-of-way?
- Is it considered hazardous?
- Is the owner easy to work with or not?
- If you cannot remove, relocate, or modify the hazard, is adding guardrail feasible? If not... Would delineation help. Guide drivers around the hazard, particularly at night and in low visibility conditions?

Examples of delineation include retroreflective tapes on utility poles; and object markers at the end of culvert headwalls

A municipality is not generally liable for damage done to mailboxes located in the road right-of-way. To maintain good public relations, some municipalities pay a portion of the replacement cost of a damaged mailbox even if it is located inside the right-of-way.



According to the MMA Roads Manual, since the municipality may be liable for injuries caused by obstructions in town ways, the primary concern is to remove the obstruction. This can often be accomplished by notifying the person responsible for creating the obstruction, and demanding immediate removal. If this fails, and if the obstruction is located in the traveled portion of the town way, the road commissioner or municipal officers should have the obstruction removed and should seek to recover expenses of removal from the responsible party.

A number of Maine laws provide for municipal authority to deal with obstructions. If, however, the obstruction (such as a post or column) is located within the right-of-way, but outside of the traveled portion of the town way (in the road shoulder, for example), and the abutter refuses to remove the obstruction when requested to do so by the municipality, the municipality should not attempt to exercise “self-help” and remove the obstruction. Instead, the municipality should file suit seeking to have the abutter who constructed or placed the obstruction in the right-of-way ordered to remove it. Otherwise, the abutter could sue the municipality, alleging that its property was taken without due process of law and without payment of just compensation. The municipality also might remind the abutter, in the written notice to remove the obstruction, that the abutter could be liable for property damage and personal injury caused by the obstruction.

Conclusion

Roadsides can be just as dangerous as the roads themselves if they are not well designed or maintained. Towns and cities should become aware of the roadside hazards in their boundaries and take steps to eliminate or protect them.

“Best Management Practices” for Snow and Ice Control in Maine... from an environmental perspective

This manual was created a few years ago. It was prepared by many Maine personnel including many municipal officials, soil & water conservation folks, a few DOT folks, and many more.



Piles of wasted winter sand

The purpose of this manual is to present tools and best practices for snow and ice control, when they should be used, and their limitations. The manual establishes clear and consistent guidelines for municipalities and contractors to achieve an acceptable level of service balanced with cost and environmental impacts of chlorides and abrasives on Maine’s land and water resources. It promotes the understanding of the tools, best practices, and limitations for snow and ice control.

The manual will also help snow and ice control professionals increase their understanding of when to use, and when not to use, these tools and practices. In addition, it encourages progressive changes in snow and ice control practices that will help reduce salt/sand use and environmental impacts while



Sand on snowpacked pavement

meeting the safety and mobility needs of roadway users. By adopting and following the standards, municipal officials & contractors can show due diligence in their snow removal practices. This manual provides options for consideration and presents decision makers with a set of best management practices (BMP) that have the potential to reduce the misuse of chlorides and potentially limit the impacts of chlorides or abrasives on infrastructure investments, such as equipment, vehicles and the environment without reducing the level of service.



Bare pavement from early salt application

What does the manual cover?

This field handbook includes suggestions for improved practices, such as anti-icing, pre-wetting, and pretreating, and standard best practices in quality snow and ice control programs that are likely to result in identifying the right amount of product being spread and minimizing reapplication requirements.

This manual provides the following information for each BMP:

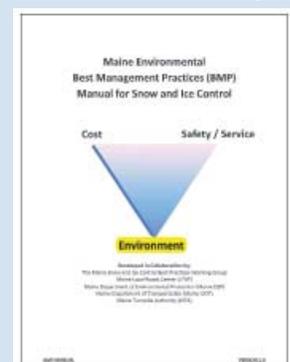
- What is the BMP?
- How does it work?
- How is the BMP implemented?
- What are the planning or technical considerations?
- What are the potential benefits?
- What is the cost to implement the BMP?

**WRITTEN FOR MAINE TOWNS,
CITIES OR CONTRACTORS**

NOW AVAILABLE

IT'S FREE!

If you or your town is interested in getting one or more copies, please send an email to local.web@maine.gov



or call the Center at **1-800-498-9133**.

It is also on the website at www.maine.gov/mdot/mlrc/

MAINE LOCAL ROADS CENTER

The Maine Local Roads Center is part of the Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP)- a nationwide effort jointly funded by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the various state departments of transportation, and state universities. Its purpose is to decode technical information on roads, streets, bridges and public transportation and put it into a form that is useful to local government personnel.

The Maine Local Roads Center is sponsored by the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) and FHWA. This newsletter is intended to keep you informed about training opportunities in the form of workshops and seminars and about publications, techniques or products that might help you in your work. It will also provide a place where useful information can be exchanged among Maine towns on whatever road and street related topics are of interest to you.

Other resources which are available from the Center include:

- Statewide workshops on a wide variety of subjects
- The Maine "Roads Scholar" program
- Publications which are either free or available at a very nominal cost
- Practical advice and technical support by phone, email, or website
- A traveling "Road Ranger" & "Bridge Ranger" who can provide local training or advice
- RSMS: a program for managing road & sign maintenance

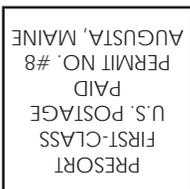
This is a newsletter about local roads, it is written to assist Maine municipalities in dealing with transportation related concerns.

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Any findings, conclusions or recommendations presented in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of FHWA or MaineDOT.

return service requested



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